UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTY-FIRST SESSION

Official Records

SIXTH COMMITTEE
2nd meeting
held on
Friday, 20 September 1996
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 2nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. ESCOVAR SALOM (Venezuela)

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.6/51/SR.2
5 November 1996
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

96-81195 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

1. The CHAIRMAN said that the work of the Committee for the current session would be particularly vital because of the seriousness, nature and scope of the items contained in the agenda, which were the substance of what might be the future of the United Nations in the twenty-first century. A number of those items were fundamental to expanding and strengthening the bases of the international legal system.

2. The teamwork of all members of the Committee and the General Assembly would be necessary. That would require the political will of States and the Organization and favourable international public opinion, which were basic elements for creating the global conviction that progress must be achieved in international legal institutions.

3. The other Committees of the Organization could also contribute to the work of the Sixth Committee through their work on activities relating to international law.

ELECTION OF THE VICE-CHAIRMEN AND THE RAPPORTEUR

4. The CHAIRMAN said that, on the basis of the consultations held concerning the election of the other members of the Bureau, Ms. Felicity Jane Wong (New Zealand) and Mr. Dumitru Mazilu (Romania) had been nominated for the two offices of Vice-Chairman and Ms. Pasacaline Boum (Cameroon) had been nominated for the office of Rapporteur.

5. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to elect Ms. Wong (New Zealand) and Mr. Mazilu (Romania) as Vice-Chairmen and Ms. Boum as Rapporteur.

6. It was so decided.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK (A/C.6/51/L.1)

7. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the text of a letter dated 6 September from the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences addressed to the Chairman of the Sixth Committee. The letter pointed out, inter alia, that conference-servicing resources were not abundant and that the demand for such services was becoming greater every day. At Headquarters, the cost of a single page in the six languages was $916, of which $612 was for translation. The cost of a meeting was $4,553, of which $4,194 was for interpretation. The cost of a summary record was $6,796. The previous year, the Sixth Committee had lost 52 hours as a result of delays and meetings ending early. That loss of hours had represented over $100,000. The Sixth Committee's utilization rate had been barely 70 per cent, well below the target established by the Committee on Conferences. Moreover, intergovernmental organizations were responsible for ensuring the rational use of conference-servicing resources and the key to

conserving the limited resources available was the will to redouble efforts in order to turn around the critical situation.

8. As a consequence of financial cutbacks decided by the General Assembly, the Sixth Committee would hold a maximum of five to seven meetings per week, which would be allocated by Conference Services in the light of the requirements of the Main Committees and subcommittees as well as the availability of services. Since the Committee must consider more items during the current year than in the previous year and would have diminished services, its work would have to be organized very efficiently and it would have to depend, more than ever, on the cooperation of its members.

9. He gave a detailed explanation of the proposed timetable for the Committee's work, on the understanding that it was subject to change and would be implemented flexibly.

10. After a debate on the allocation of item 151, entitled "Measures to eliminate international terrorism", in which Mrs. LADGHAM (Tunisia), Mr. SIDI ABED (Algeria), Ms. WILMSHURST (United Kingdom), Mrs. CUETO MILIÁN (Cuba), Mr. RAO (India) and Mr. ROSENSTOCK (United States of America) participated, the CHAIRMAN suggested that the timetable should be adopted as it was, on the understanding that it would be re-examined later in order to satisfy the concerns voiced.

11. It was so decided.

12. Mrs. CUETO MILIÁN (Cuba) said that Cuba attached great importance to the item on programming and that it was one of the countries which had joined the consensus when General Assembly resolutions 32/197 and 41/213 had been adopted. Both resolutions were explicit on that question. It was regrettable that the agenda and the medium-term plan had been submitted somewhat late, which had prevented the Main Committees of the United Nations and the Member States from considering the proposals contained in the medium-term plan with the necessary depth and rigour. The above-mentioned resolutions required the Secretariat to allow the widest possible consultations among Member States. She therefore appealed to the Chairman and the Bureau to allow Cuba, under the item on the organization of work and in view of the flexibility which had always characterized the work and decisions of the Sixth Committee, to submit a proposal, or reserve the right to do so, to analyse at a later date the medium-term plan which the Committee had been unable to consider as thoroughly as it should have. The medium-term plan contained a series of guidelines, programmes and decisions which were the direct responsibility of the Sixth Committee, and no other body of the United Nations would have the powers, competence and prerogatives necessary to take a decision and to make recommendations on decisions which might be adopted by other Main Committees of the United Nations on questions of a distinctly technical legal and regulatory nature.

13. In that connection, she referred to the decision adopted that same day by the General Committee of the General Assembly concerning document A/51/250. The Cuban proposal in no way contradicted that decision. She was aware that the General Committee of the General Assembly had allocated to the Fifth Committee the task of dealing with the medium-term plan, but the fact was that there was

still time for many delegations to become aware that the Sixth and other Committees had legal grounds for taking a decision on the medium-term plan at any time, in a flexible manner, for their recommendations, as Main Committees, would be very appropriate for the Fifth Committee.

14. She also requested the Secretariat to indicate, at a later date, whether the medium-term plan as it concerned the Sixth Committee could be presented and debated. In that connection, she said that, in document A/C.6/51/L.1, the days set aside to debate item 151 could also be used to consider other items which delegations might deem important.

15. Lastly, she would submit, in the proper official manner, a request to the Chairman of the Sixth Committee as representative of the Bureau of the Committee, and to the Secretariat of the United Nations for the Secretariat to submit its recommendations and thoughts on how General Assembly resolutions 32/197 and 41/213 had been applied in elaborating the medium-term plan, in particular regarding the items which were the province of the Sixth Committee.

16. Mr. ROSENSTOCK (United States of America) objected to the proposal put forward by the representative of Cuba; the plenary Assembly, on the recommendation of its General Committee, had already allocated the item on the medium-term plan to the Fifth Committee. Therefore, the Sixth Committee should not interfere with the work of the other Committees.

17. The CHAIRMAN said that the observations formulated by the representatives of Cuba and the United States would be taken into account.

18. Mr. LEE (Secretary of the Committee), replying to a question posed by the representative of the United Kingdom concerning the possibility of obtaining the Fifth Committee documents relating to item 120 on human resources management, said that the Secretariat was already selecting and reproducing the most interesting documents and that they would be circulated sufficiently in advance of the debate on that item. As for the question posed by the representative of India concerning the date of publication of document A/51/317, the last document listed on page 3 of the English version of the note by the Secretariat on the organization of work (A/C.6/51/L.1), owing to the volume of work faced by the Secretariat relating to documentation, the publication of that document had been delayed until Monday, 23 September.

The meeting rose at 4.10 p.m.